

Chapter 1

Pursuits in History

The first thing that somebody could ask me, concerning this book, is the reason why I'm even writing it at all. I mean, after all, what's the big deal if the real, historical d'Artagnan (*hero of Alexandre Dumas' classics 'The Three Musketeers,' 'Twenty Years After,' and 'Vicomte de Bragelonne' – aka, 'The Man in the Iron Mask'*) had arrived for the first time into Paris in 1640, or even earlier – as it's mostly believed to have been sometime between 1625 and 1633? Well, it's for two reasons, actually. Firstly, we all want as accurate an history relayed to us as possible; and, secondly, such a hypothesis (i.e. the correct dating of his arrival into the capital of France) would surely rescue a certain (*and, I use this word very loosely!*) “historical” author from dying into a complete fictitious wasteland. I am speaking of a certain Gatiien de Courtilz de Sandras,*¹ author of many alleged “fake” memoirs – including a three-volume set on d'Artagnan himself . . . *Fake?* Well, that's the most popular belief, anyway. But, to be honest, I'm not really sure if the majority of historical lovers (especially of seventeenth century French studies) really believes that Courtilz (as gifted of a writer as he certainly was – *inspiration even for Daniel Defoe*) is a trusted historian. So, why rescue him?

Well, to be quite frank, believing the ‘earlier’ dating of d'Artagnan's Paris arrival (again, of between 1625 and 1633) can also cause other problems for us, too. And, perhaps, these are the most important reasons of all – *which will especially affect the readers of Dumas*. And, that's the fact that if d'Artagnan came to Paris prior to 1633, the possibilities of him meeting, or especially of becoming close friends with the three Musketeers (*Athos, Porthos, and Aramis* – in real life, that is) would almost be totally void and null. This early date would have made him much older than the others; and, too, for the mere fact that the historical Athos had died in 1643 (arriving in Paris himself sometime around 1640 – *giving him only about three years of an adventurous career*), it would make the possibility of their acquaintances harder to believe; or, at least of any kind of friendship. And, this goes for the other two, as well – Porthos and Aramis – who had also arrived into Paris in circa 1640. Though, and at the same time, we don't want fantasy to outweigh good senses in desperately wishing that they all four were true comrades in arms. So, no matter

the consequences, history must avail.

In my own personal pursuit of accurate history, I'm actually a bit dubious of *any* historical author, because anybody can certainly make a mistake – including myself. But, that doesn't mean that I don't have a favorite Musketeer historian; which I do; and, that falls onto the shoulders of a certain Charles Samaran, a 20th-century French historian and archivist, who wrote, I feel, the most important work on the French soldier's life in 1912: *D'Artagnan, Capitaine des Mousquetaires du Roi: Histoire Véridique d'un Héros de Roman (D'Artagnan, Captain of the King's Musketeers: True Story of a Romantic Hero)*.² And, having access to old documents (which his position allowed him²), he was able to pull old records that had been hidden from time since the late seventeenth century – doing all of us a favor, and bringing that old hero back to life to the world at large. Though that responsibility was already done near fifty years beforehand, by the genius pen-stroke of Alexandre Dumas, when he gave the world the famous novels about this Gascon adventurer and his three Musketeer friends. But, even so, and before Dumas even had done this, his work wouldn't even have come-to-be if it weren't for Gatien Courtilz de Sandras – who had brought the soldier of fortune back from total, historical obscurity in his purported “fake” memoirs, in 1700, in his *Memoirs of Monsieur d'Artagnan*;³ which Dumas had used very freely for his first novel on the Musketeers. However, it was really by de Sandras' hand, and his alone, that the soldier, then dead for near 30 years at the time of the memoirs' publication, was brought back to the public's attention; though, during his own lifetime, d'Artagnan had already become a legend to the people of France; but, unfortunately – and, despite his ‘once upon a time’ fame – had it not been for Courtilz, who was an ex-soldier himself (*claiming to have even been a Musketeer at one time*³), and in consideration of the public's short memory, Dumas' hero, that old Musketeer captain, would have been completely lost to the ravages of time.

But, even if that's the case, should we really take Courtilz's word on *when* d'Artagnan actually arrived into Paris to begin his military career? For, *and as the reader has undoubtedly guessed*, it's in 1640 that Courtilz places that young fortune-seeker thereto – despite the fact that Dumas had caused him to arrive much, much earlier in his famous tale – in either 1625, as he had originally written, or in 1626, as a handful of historians say that he actually meant, in order to coincide with the actual timeline of historical events that was his story's background. I mean, after-all, if Courtilz himself was

a Musketeer, then who better to relate this to the public than he? *Right?* And, it has even been suggested that de Sandras was a friend of the old captain.*4

Well, before we can even go that route, on whether to trust Courtilz's words or not (or, whether, even, to believe or disbelieve that he himself was either a Musketeer at one time, or that he either knew or was friends with d'Artagnan), we need to speak a bit more about Courtilz himself; for, if there are legitimate concerns against his historical relating, then we must seek the man's intentions, and analyze if we can even trust anything that he had to say, at all. But, even so, why waste our time if we truly find out, *and as Voltaire himself had warned the world about*, that he was nothing more than a dangerous pamphleteer who simply wrote dramatic "fake" histories for money and not truth?

I want it to be understood, though, from the very beginning here, that I myself don't lay very heavy claims on Courtilz's accuracy, in that I will blindly say that his works are pure history, and that truth is all that he sought. But, and it must also be admitted to, that not every person who claims to be writing accurate history is being extremely honest with the public about what they're writing either . . . *What do I mean?* . . . Well, even Dumas himself, it is now believed, had hoaxed his readers into believing that he had found some forgotten memoirs in his exhaustive investigations into the lives of the three Musketeers (Athos, Porthos, and Aramis); in a work, entitled: *'The Memoirs of the Comte de La Fère'* – even going as far as to give the public some reference numbers from the very library that he had supposedly found them;*5 wherein, only several pages in, he again found the names of those three historically elusive men. Though not well known to the public at large, at least there's a lot of copies of the *'Memoirs of D'Artagnan'* lying about, and even available for purchase online for the interested buyer. But, not so for de La Fère's Memoirs. After much investigation from serious researchers, not a single copy has ever come to light.*6 But, what's even funnier is that two men, a little later-on than Dumas (that is, Paul Féval and a M. Lassaz – *aka, and according to Wikipedia, Lassaz was one of the many pen names for H. Bedford Jones**7), had found La Fère's memoirs years later in the attic of a home owned by a descendant of Athos' servant Grimaud – who, in reality, is nothing more than a fictitious servant. So, Féval and Lassaz had used these memoirs to compose a 4-book project called *'The Years Between Series,'**8 a story that falls in-between *'The Three Musketeers'* and its "official" sequel" (also by Dumas) *'Twenty Years After.'*

Not only, but there's been several other books written by Dumas fans, during the Victorian period, and in the early twentieth century (both in French and in English), who had attributed their books as to have been written by Dumas himself – *actually having Dumas as the author on the front cover* – perhaps using small folios or ideas found by them, which was said to have been written by Dumas, or just a scrap of a story idea; or, even, expanding some plays written by the great story-teller, and merely “expanding” the play to include d'Artagnan and his three Musketeer friends. Such books include ‘*D'Artagnan the Kingmaker*,’ ‘*D'Artagnan's Exploit*,’ ‘*D'Artagnan Forward*,’ and, possibly a fourth book by this same author (*but, of which I have not yet actually seen myself*), called ‘*D'Artagnan to the Rescue*,’*⁹ all by Henry L. Williams. Then, there's ‘*Son of Porthos*,’ by Paul Mahalin (and, which, ironically, was actually translated by Henry L. Williams in at least one English version – as he was also the translator of many of Dumas' novels, including those of the Musketeers); and, finally, ‘*D'Artagnan: the sequel to the Three Musketeers*,’ by H. Bedford Jones – all of which I include in the appendix section at the back of this book where I list books about d'Artagnan in the English language.

But, as far as the ‘*Years Between Series*,’ and of the usage of the fictitious ‘*Memoirs of de La Fère*,’ I really believe that Féval and Lassaz took Dumas' claims for what they really were, understanding his pursuit for the dramatic, and had continued this hoax themselves. But, in all honesty, I myself take all this with a grain of salt; and, as to how I see such things, it all makes for good literary and marketing genius. Though, and at the same time, it really is disappointing, for we all really want to believe such matters; and, I even have suspicions that others who wrote on d'Artagnan's behalf (in trying to present “accurate” histories for us to ingest) weren't exactly being honest with the public either. But, for that last shady remark (*though rudeness was not my intention*), I won't push that thought any further, for I am really grateful for all of what's been given to the public thus far – *whether displaying accurate history or not* – because they're keeping the memory of the swashbuckling hero alive; and, that's what's most important. Therefore, please keep in mind, that with what may appear to be the *criticizing* of other author's words in this book, please be assured that no such intentions are on my part. I actually respect all other authors who came before me (*whether in writing strict fiction for entertainment's sake, or even in their attempt at finding true history*), tipping respectfully my Musketeer hat toward them all.

Explanatory Notes for Chapter 1:

Pursuits in History

***1. Gatien de Courtilz de Sandras...**

I've seen his name spelled both as CourtilZ and CourtilS. Either one is correct, as both are a variant of the same name. Herein, I spell his name with the "z" as opposed to the "s;" though, you will see quotes herein, from other sources, who reference him with the "s."

***2. Which his position allowed him...**

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Samaran:*

*Charles Samaran (28 October 1879 – 15 October 1982) was a 20th-century French historian and archivist, who was born in Cravencères (in the Gers) and died at Nogaro (also in the Gers), shortly before his 103rd birthday ... Having graduated as an archivist-palaeographer in 1901 with a thesis devoted to the House of Armagnac then working as a member of the École française de Rome (1901–1903), Charles Samaran became an archivist at the Archives nationales. In 1908 he published *Les diplômes originaux des Mérovingiens*, "an extraordinary achievement by a young palaeographer who would remain until his old age an infallible decipherer of difficult texts", a collection which played a key role in the study of Merovingian scriptures.*

***Wikipedia...**

I'd like to speak my mind quickly about the website *Wikipedia*, because in this book, I do make use of its wording. Allow me to say, first of all, that I do understand that it cannot be fully trusted 100%. But, then again, what can be totally trusted? However, and what's really good about Wikipedia is the fact that it does give references from which information was taken. That's where the usefulness of it comes – especially since anybody from anywhere can add information to any Wikipedia page. Not that that's especially bad, it just means that all of us must stay on our toes to make sure we aren't taken-in by false information. Therefore, when I refer my readers to this website, I am wishing for them to

make use of the “source material” from which the information was gleaned. Besides, and since a large library of encyclopedias aren't as popular today as they had been yesteryear, Wikipedia has become the king of encyclopedias! And, many people do make use of it on a daily basis. Therefore, it cannot be ignored or overlooked. Until something better comes along, we *can* make use of it – though being cautious in our endeavors – as well as being cautious with any other source material.

***3. Courtilz, claiming to have even been a Musketeer at one time...**

According to B.N.F. French manuscript 25865 to 25870, and quoted by Courtilz historian Jean Lombard, during Courtilz's imprisonment in the Bastille, and in the information concerning him, de Sandras had claimed to have served in the first company of Musketeers from 1660 to 1666 – under the captaincy of d'Artagnan himself! – as this is also mentioned by Odile Bordaz, in her Explanatory Note for the Forward to her book *“D'Artagnan: Captain-Lieutenant of the Grand Musketeers of the King”* . . . I will revisit this thought once again later-on in this book. That is, of Courtilz possibly being a Musketeer.

***4. It has even been suggested that de Sandras was a friend of the old captain...**

This was said by Jean de Jaurgain on page 12 of the very first full-length book about the real-life d'Artagnan, of Captain Tréville, and of the Three Musketeers, in his 1910 book, called: *‘Troisvilles, D'Artagnan, et les Trois Mousquetaires (Tréville, d'Artagnan, and the Three Musketeers).’* This is what we read:

“These curious memoirs were written by Gatien de Courtilz, Lord of Sandras, friend of Captain d'Artagnan.”

***5. Reference numbers from the very library that he had supposedly found them...**

“...at the moment at which, discouraged by so many fruitless investigations, we were about to abandon our search, we at length found, guided by the counsels of our illustrious friend Paulin Paris, a manuscript in folio, endorsed 4772 or 4773, we do not recollect which, having for title, ‘Memoirs of the

Comte de la Fère, Touching Some Events Which Passed in France Toward the End of the Reign of King Louis XIII., and the Commencement of the Reign of King Louis XIV.’ It may be easily imagined how great was our joy when, in turning over this manuscript, our last hope, we found at the twentieth page the name of Athos, at the twenty-seventh the name of Porthos, and at the thirty-first the name of Aramis. The discovery of a completely unknown manuscript at a period in which historical science is carried to such a high degree appeared almost miraculous.” – Preface to ‘The Three Musketeers,’ by Alexandre Dumas

***6. Not a single copy has ever come to light...**

“Subsequent sleuthing has never revealed a copy of any such memoir, and it is now definitely established that Dumas was hoaxing his readers.” – Geoffrey F. Hall and Joan Sanders: ‘D’Artagnan, the Ultimate Musketeer,’ Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1964.

“One would search in vain for this precious folio manuscript which has never been classified except in the imagination of Alexandre Dumas.” – Jean de Jaurgain, 1910, ‘Troisvilles, D’Artagnan, et les Trois Mousquetaires,’ page 13.

Also, it should be noted that de la Fère was the name that Dumas had ended up giving to Athos in his stories.

***7. According to Wikipedia...**

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Bedford-Jones. This information was, in turn, quoted from Michael Ashley’s book ‘Who’s Who in Horror and Fantasy Fiction,’ 1978; Elm tree Books, p. 30, ISBo-241-89528-6. Henry Bedford-Jones was a very prolific writer; so much so, that he was dubbed the king of pulp fiction in the early 1900’s.

“He wrote nearly 200 novels, 400 novelettes, and 800 short stories, earning the nickname ‘King of the Pulps’.” – Wikipedia.

“Bedford-Jones was an enormously prolific writer; the pulp editor Harold Hersey once recalled meeting Bedford-Jones in Paris, where he was working on two novels simultaneously, each story on its own separate typewriter.” – ‘Bedford Jones, H(enry James O’Brien),’ in ‘St. James Guide To Fantasy Writers,’ edited by David Pringle, St. James Press, 1996, ISBN 1-55862-205-5, p. 51-3.

It's also said that one of his friends had called for him on the phone. His wife answered and told the caller that her husband was busy in writing a novel. The reply was that he'd wait on the phone, insinuating that Jones was so fast of a writer that he didn't have long to wait until he had finished the story. Here's the actual quote from Chicago bookman and mystery writer Vincent Starrett, recalling this in his 1965 autobiography, *Born in a Bookshop*:

"He needed an electric typewriter to keep abreast of his thoughts. Indeed, the speed and quantity of his output gave rise to legends, such as the one about a friend who tried to get him on the telephone.

"Henry can't come to the phone,' his wife is said to have reported. 'He's working on a novel.'

"I'll hold on until he's finished,' said the caller.

"I don't know how true the story is; but I have myself seen four typewriters lined up in his rooms with stories going full blast on all of them."

For this and more, please visit:
https://web.archive.org/web/20090112151645/http://pulprack.com/arch/2002/12/h__bedfordjones.html.

As can be seen, at the end of this book (in my *"Books on or about d'Artagnan, and his world, printed in English for the English reader"* section), Jones has three fictional books published on these subjects, which are *'D'Artagnan: a sequel to the Three Musketeers,' 'The King's Passport,'* and *'Cyrano.'* But, and again according to Michael Ashley's book: *'Who's Who in Horror and Fantasy Fiction,' 'The Further Adventures of d'Artagnan'* might also be attributed to Jones, too, since Mr. Ashley also gives the name *Lucien Pemjean* as yet another pen name for him. But, and perhaps even more astounding than this is that another pen name attributed to Mr. Jones is *Paul Ferval* – bringing to our minds fiction writer Paul Féval, fils (the second), author of *'The Years Between Series'* (which was co-authored by M. Lassaz – another pen name for Jones as I've already mentioned). Paul Féval is the son of renowned contemporary writer of Dumas, Paul Féval père (the first), author of the swashbuckling story *'Le Bossu'* ... Oh, and by the way, *'The Years Between Series'* was translated into English by Cleveland B. Chase. And, you've guessed it!, Cleveland B. Chase is one more pen name for Mr. Jones in affiliation with our Musketeer stories.

***8. The Years Between Series...**

These books are as follows: *'The Mysterious Cavalier,' 'Martyr to the Queen,' 'Secret of the Bastille,'* and *'Heir to Buckingham.'* They were published into English in the 1930's, and copies for purchase can still be found online. These, again, have some adventures of d'Artagnan, along with Cyrano de Bergerac, which takes place in-between Dumas' *'Three Musketeers'* and *'Twenty Years After'* ... The quote, concerning the *'Memoirs of the Count de la Fère,'* is found in the preface to the first story, *'The Mysterious Cavalier'* ... Also, and worthy of note, is that after this four-book project was completed, Paul Féval, fils, (apparently alone without Lassaz) wrote two more books which took place in between Dumas' *'Twenty Years After'* and *'Le Vicomte de Bragelonne.'* These were *'Comrades at Arms'* and *'A Salute to Cyrano.'* These last two, combined, were sub-titled *'D'Artagnan and Cyrano reconciled;'* for, the first four books (officially titled, again, *'The Years Between Series'*) were also known as *'D'Artagnan against Cyrano.'* As can be seen by these two sub-titles, in the first set we see D'Artagnan pitted against the long-nosed swordsman; and, by the end of those four books, they become friends – of which they remain for the last two books in the entire, completed series. In the French versions, though, instead of only two books in this second series, there was a third book in between the two. So, when being translated into English (*by, certainly, the mysterious Cleveland B. Chase!*), the books were simply enlarged into 2 volumes instead of 3; but, still retaining the entire story. However, and what's interesting to note, is that the middle book, in French, had a unique title: *'L'évasion du Masque de Fer;'* or, that is, in English: *'Escape from the Iron Mask.'* Which has – *you've guessed it!* – an adventure with the Man in the Iron Mask. But, even so, here is the complete list of Féval's titles, in both French and English:

'The Mysterious Cavalier (Le chevalier Mystère)'

'Martyr to the Queen (Martyre de reine)'

'Secret of the Bastille (Le Secret de la Bastille)'

'Heir to Buckingham (L'Héritage de Buckingham)'

'Comrade at Arms (Secret d'État [State secret])'

'L'évasion du Masque de Fer [Escape from the Iron Mask]'

'A Salute to Cyrano (Les Noces de Cyrano [Cyrano's wedding])'

9. *D'Artagnan to the Rescue...

As I explain, at the back of this book (in a section, called: “*Books on or about d'Artagnan, and his world, printed in English for the English reader*”), this book is unknown to me if it actually exists or not; but I found mention of it at this very informative and well-organized website: <https://www.pastichesdumas.com/php/fiche.php?code=DartKingMaker>. In turn, I emailed the author of the webpage in question, to see if he had anymore information on this book to give. The gentleman was very friendly in responding, but he was uncertain as to its existence himself. But, he did tell me that he found the book listed, as a genuine novel, in Aksel J. Nielsen's 1964 book: ‘*Bibliographie d'Alexandre Dumas*’ (Copenhagen). Though rare these days, I myself was able to find and purchase original copies of Henry L. Williams' other three novels (‘*D'Artagnan the Kingmaker*,’ ‘*D'Artagnan Forward*,’ and the “extremely” rare ‘*D'Artagnan's Exploit*’); but, I've found no trace of this possible fourth book online. But, I am in hopes of both finding and obtaining a copy in the near future – if it does exist.